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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to solicit information about Graduate Teaching Assistants' (GTA) training from all academic levels within graduate institutions and to make comparisons both down the hierarchical ladder and between speech communication and nonspeech graduate programs. Subjects were department chairs/heads from 270 nonspeech and 69 speech departments that routinely hire GTAs to teach courses. A 46-item questionnaire containing both open- and closed-ended questions and dealing with eight major GTAs training issues was mailed to department chairs/heads during winter semester 1987. Results indicated that speech departments were leading the way in the number of departments that train teaching assistants but not in the breadth or scope of that training. (Ten tables of data are included, and 96 references are attached.) (MG)

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Why Johnny (and Joanny) CAN Teach Speech Communication: A Comparison of Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) Training in Speech and Nonspeech Departments in the United States

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Running head: A COMPARISON OF GTA TRAINING...

Abstract

This paper presents the results of a survey assessing the state-of-the-art of Graduate Teaching Assistant training . Respondents were department chairs/heads from 270 nonspeech and 69 speech departments that routinely hire GTAs to teach courses. Results indicate that speech departments are leading the way in the proportion of departments that train but not in the breadth or scope of that training.

Why Johnny (and Joanny) CAN Teach Speech Communication: A Comparison of Graduate Teaching Assistant Training in Speech and Nonspeech Departments in the United States

Across all disciplines, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs or TAs) account for an impressive percentage of the instruction in undergraduate education in this country. According to Nyquist and Wulff (1987), faculty associated with the Center for Instructional Development and Research at the University of Washington, by "1980, TAs were responsible for a portion of the instruction in 33% of the 100-200 level courses and for almost 25% of the instruction in all undergraduate courses at the University of Washington" (p. 144). Furthermore, the figures at the University of Washington were somewhat smaller than those at eight "peer institutions"[1], where 53.5% of the instruction of introductory courses was in the hands of GTAs in 1983 (p. 144).

Obviously, GTAs are not utilized in every institution. However, in institutions granting graduate degrees, the use of GTAs is a typical way of staffing or aiding in basic courses. Kenneth Eble (1987), a professor of English at the University of Utah, in his 1986 address to the first interdisciplinary national conference on teaching assistants, stated that a "higher education system growing from about three million students at the beginning of the 1960s to 12 million in the 1980s obviously needed large numbers of TAs" (p. 8). Further, he claimed that an historical review of "TAing" showed that "after World War II, teaching assistants were the major way of supporting graduate students and teaching basic undergraduate courses" (p. 8). Perhaps one of the most impressive support items for the claim that TAs are pervasive in higher education and, therefore, of major concern to educators committed to quality education, is the simple existence of the national conference on teaching assistants. The need for such a conference was validated through the administration of a needs-assessment survey of graduate school deans, college deans, department chairs, faculty, and TAs. Three hundred fifteen participants representing 117 U.S. universities and two Canadian institutions participated in the conference. As stated in the readings from the conference, the "national TA conference and its volume of readings indicate a widespread recognition of the importance of the TA role in United States universities and of the work that remains to be done" (p. vii).

As would be expected, some departments rely more heavily on GTA teaching than do others. According to Sally Taylor (1987), Director of Composition at Brigham Young University, GTAs at this institution teach "over 75% of [the] English composition classes each semester" (p. 230). The importance of GTAs for the teaching of English is further substantiated by the many articles written about GTA training in that field (see, for example, Hellstrom, 1984; Hennessy, 1986; Lehr, 1983; Spooner & O'Donnell, 1987;

Tirrell, 1985). As a whole, chemistry also appears to be quite dependent on GTA teaching. In an article describing an innovative model for training GTAs, McCurdy and Brooks(1979) indicated that chemistry departments "in many colleges and universities depend heavily on graduate teaching assistants (TAs) to handle a large percentage of the instruction and interaction with students. TAs generally are expected to handle all laboratory instruction. Many TAs are also responsible for recitation sections" (p. 233). In her survey of the 97 (combined) largest departments of chemistry, education, and psychology, Stokely (1987) reported that over 90% of the education and psychology departments and 100% of the chemistry departments in her sample employed doctoral teaching assistants. Similarly, several other departments appear quite frequently in the literature on GTA training, evaluation, and supervision: foreign languages, sociology, biology, mathematics, physics, and speech communication (see, for example, Henderson, 1985; LeBlanc, 1987; Parrett, 1987; Russo, 1982; Trank, 1986).

Of special interest to this analysis is the fact that speech communication seems to be one of those departments that relies heavily on the use of GTAs in introductory courses. Literature in the field seems to support that idea.

In the most recent SCA-sponsored analysis of the basic course, Gibson, Hanna and Huddleston (1985) made a number of important observations about the role of the basic course in the speech communication department and the role of GTAs in that basic course. According to that study, "respondents...indicated that the basic course plays a significant role in their student credit hour generation. In 35% of reporting schools, the basic course accounted for over 40% of the department's total credit hours. Additionally, 45% of the schools responding indicated that the basic course yielded from 11 to 40% of their departmental credit hours" (p. 283). These percentages become especially relevant when considered in the light of who is actually doing the teaching. According to the Gibson et al. (1985) survey, 18% of the teachers in the basic course were graduate assistants. Another 30% were instructors, who are frequently people who have completed a Master's degree or credits toward a Ph.D. but who do not hold the terminal degree (p. 289). Consequently, this group is comprised of former graduate assistants in many cases.

In addition to the prevalence of GTAs in the field of speech communication, it appears that GTAs are employed in significant ways in those departments. In a 1979 survey of GTAs in speech communication, Kaufman-Everett and Backlund (1981) found that 46.6% of the 343 GTAs surveyed had sole responsibility for their own courses and an additional 39.4% had primary responsibility for their courses "while utilizing departmental course plans, syllabi, exams, and other materials" (p. 49). In all, 86% of the GTAs surveyed taught autonomous sections of speech communication courses.

The research cited thus far shows a clear picture of the use of GTAs in undergraduate instruction: GTAs are used extensively throughout the nation,

and the field of speech communication appears to be one of the disciplines using GTAs in positions of primary responsibility for instruction in their sections. The importance of the use of GTAs leads directly to a concern over the training they receive for their positions. As Jackson (1985) stated, in "order for the institution, the GTA, and students to gain maximum benefit from the teaching assistantship the institution must insure that every GTA is prepared for his or her instructional assignment. Without the necessary training and support even the most dedicated GTAs will fail to perform their instructional duties to the greatest benefit of all concerned" (p. 288).

A closer look at the training provided for GTAs in the country overall and in speech communication in particular should provide educators with useful information concerning the needs of a training program for GTAs. Specifically, a review of what the literature in this area reveals about what GTAs need in order to do an effective teaching job as well as what the literature reports that the GTAs are currently receiving in their training should provide valuable information about the state-of-the-art of GTA training. This information, in turn, will allow speech educators and others to evaluate their own training programs and make necessary changes. Without information about possible innovations elsewhere in academe, speech communication will continue doing "more of the same" without any yardstick by which to measure our successes and/or failures.

What do GTAs need?

A number of recent articles provided theoretical arguments for what should and should not be included in a GTA training program (see, for example, J. D. W. Andrews, 1985; P. H. Andrews, 1983; Bailey, 1987; Davis, 1987; DeBoer, 1979; DiDonato, 1983; Jaros, 1987; Jossem, 1987; McGaghie & Mathis, 1977; Minkel, 1987; Rivers, 1983; Smith, 1972; Staton-Spicer & Nyquist, 1979; Stice, 1984; Wankat & Oreovicz, 1984). Other articles examined theoretical issues related to teaching and learning that can be applied to GTA training (Buckenmeyer, 1972; Daly & Korinek, 1980; Davey & Marion, 1987; Eble, 1981; Ervin & Muyskens, 1982; Feezel, 1974; Fraher, 1984; Franck & Samaniego, 1981; Lashbrook & Wheeless, 1978; Lynn, 1977; Newcombe & Allen, 1974; Scott & Wheeless, 1977; VanKleeck & Daly, 1982). Still others examined the relationship between GTA training and various outcome variables, such as student performance, observed teaching behavior, TA attitudes, and so on (Carroll, 1980; Sharp, 1981). Few articles addressed GTA concerns regarding their training and attempted to answer the question "what do GTAs need?" Only four articles were found that have dealt specifically with this area since 1970.

In their article, "What the TA Needs, as Determined from TA Requests," Jones and Liu (1980) provided a list of fourteen possible aids and asked experienced chemistry TAs at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle to indicate which would be desirable for their teaching. These fourteen aids fell

into three general categories: 1) clarification of student behavioral objectives (file of pre-lab videotapes, file of old quizzes, file of old exams and file of current lecture notes); 2) assistance in improving teaching skills (videotape of quiz or lab section and audiotape of quiz or lab section); and 3) access to resources (TA Center, instructional videotapes for quiz, list of educational materials available, instruction in the use of office equipment, grade books, calculators, typewriter, desk space in departmental office and ditto machine for TA use). Most-requested of the three categories were items in category 1, with 89% of the TAs in the sample requesting those items. Category 3 followed with 66% and 42% of the TAs requested items in category 2.

Diamond and Gray (1987) surveyed GTAs at eight major research institutions in the United States in 1986. Of the 4400 surveys distributed in those eight schools, 1400 were returned for a response rate of 32%. Sixty percent or more of the GTAs in the sample listed the following areas as being part of their responsibility and, consequently, as being potential areas for training: grading, preparing tests, leading class discussions, conducting review sessions, and lecturing.

Ervin and Muyskens (1982) surveyed 303 subjects involved with foreign language teaching from four universities. Questionnaires were sent to three groups of people: TAs who had training but who had not taught, TAs who were teaching, and faculty. Each group was asked to respond to questions concerning priorities for teacher training using a Likert-type scale for response categories. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted with 14 TAs from two universities to gather more in-depth responses to teaching issues. Their findings suggested that inexperienced and experienced TAs differ with regard to some general training priorities. For example, inexperienced TAs tended to focus on the need to gain experience in organizing and teaching their classes while the experienced TAs focused on learning about specific methods to use in the classroom. Several areas received high ratings by both groups: learning practical teaching methods and techniques, making the class interesting, making the best use of class time, and inspiring/motivating students.

Finally, in speech communication, many similar skills are apparently needed. In their comprehensive survey of GTA training in speech communication, Kaufman-Everett and Backlund (1981) collected information about GTA needs and the state of GTA training in speech communication in 1979. They concluded from their data that, "over four-fifths of the teaching assistants fulfill two of the most important duties of a college instructor: presenting the course content and evaluating student performance" (p. 49). Clearly, training in both presentational skills and in evaluation and critiquing is critical for GTAs in speech communication.

The previous examples from the literature give some insight into the broad scope of content and skills researchers to date have posited as being

needed to be an effective GTA. These diverse elements are echoed concisely by Rubin and Feezel. In their article titled "Elements of Teacher Communication Competence," Rubin and Feezel (1986) argued that the following are necessary components for effective teaching (pp. 255-256):

1. Knowledge (of the curriculum, of the student, of the classroom and school setting, of the roles required in teaching, and of appropriate and effective communication strategies);
2. Motivation to use communication appropriately and effectively;
3. Skills to communicate appropriately and effectively (e.g., to manage relationships with students, to speak clearly and concisely, to lead and interact in groups, and to listen well).

Overall, a review of the literature provides many varying perceptions of what is needed to be an effective GTA, from the mechanics of keeping an organized gradebook to the ethics involved in managing relationships with students to the communication skills necessary for classroom interaction. Two commonalities come through clearly: much is expected of a GTA and a person in this role needs to be skillful in many areas. Further, as stated by Jackson (1985), "the graduate student enters the classroom as an instructor knowing that his or her teaching assignment is a temporary duty which has been provided in order to supply financial support for his or her graduate study....No long term reputation as a teacher is at stake for the GTA and the performance pressure felt by this individual comes from his or her own course work and research" (p. 289).

The combination of the vast breadth of content and skills needed to be an effective GTA and the low priority this assignment may have for many GTAs leads to the assumption that an effective training program would have to be comprehensive and made important to the GTA through evaluation and/or the time devoted to this process. To check this expectation, it is necessary to examine what the research shows that GTA training programs are providing.

What are they getting?

According to Larry L. Loeher, Director of Instructional Improvement at the University of California at Los Angeles (1987), GTA training programs can be classified into six models: 1) those that focus on the functional aspects of course administration (e.g., location of photocopy facilities, times and rooms in which sections meet); 2) those that focus on some standardized syllabus and ways to make sure that all students in the GTA-taught courses are ready for the same exams at the same times; 3) those that focus on the mechanics or simple methods of teaching (how to use a videotape machine, how to generate class participation, questioning techniques); 4) those that examine a single problem (how to maintain safety in a laboratory section, how to critique a

speech); 5) those that are tied to a specific content area (how to teach delivery, how to help students memorize the names of the bones in the body); and 6) those that "consider the nature of communication, how students learn, Bloom's taxonomy, what the tests you write reveal about your concept of knowledge, and so on" (p. 107). Naturally, some of these differences are tied to whether the program is University-wide or department-based and it should be possible for some training programs to incorporate more than one model, given a sufficiently-long time frame for training.

In what may have been the first comprehensive review of the literature on GTA training, Clark and McLean (1979) examined elements of GTA training programs during the 1970s. In all, 21 articles were compared to reveal consistencies in their approach to training. Nearly all programs reviewed discussed teaching techniques (e.g., lecture, class discussion, use of audio-visual materials) and used some sort of videotaping experience to help GTAs apply those techniques. Between one third and one half of the programs incorporated microteaching, supervised classroom practice, the ability to revise a presentation and try again, and a use of a teaching coach or mentor who works individually with GTAs to help them improve. Fewer than one third of the programs dealt with either educational theory or instructional objectives.

In her ten-year study of GTA training programs nationwide (1976 to 1986), Parrett (1987) identified 36 training programs that were described in the education research literature across all disciplines. The liberal arts/social sciences (foreign languages, English, speech communication, and sociology) and general science departments (chemistry, biology, and physics) offered the most reported GTA training programs between 1976 and 1986. In the liberal arts and social sciences, the focus appeared to be on training GTAs to teach self-contained sections or to team-teach with faculty; most GTA training in the general sciences focused on preparing GTAs to facilitate laboratory sections of courses. Lengths and time frames for the training programs varied widely, from two weeks prior to teaching plus three hours per week during the first term of teaching to a two-hour workshop early in the first term of teaching (p. 70). The largest percentage of programs (41.6%) involved both a preservice workshop or orientation and inservice workshops or courses during the first or later semesters of teaching. Only 19.4% of the programs reported using only preservice workshops and 5.6% relied solely on inservice or courses after teaching had begun. In terms of topics covered in the training, Parrett identified 70 possible topic areas and the degree to which they appeared in her sample. From these she distilled seven categories of topics: 1) professionalism (e.g., role of the teacher, ethics, course rationale), 2) TA specifics (e.g., duties, problems, personality), 3) instructional aids (e.g., TA manuals and handbooks, research articles, books on teaching), 4) learning and students (e.g., learning styles, student behavior), 5) general education

topics (e.g., writing behavioral objectives, grading, lecturing, philosophy of education), 6) instructional strategies (e.g., lecture, fishbowl), and 7) practice opportunities (e.g., practice grading, microteaching).

Training in speech communication seems less well-documented than in other academic disciplines. In their 1983 survey of issues related to the basic course in speech communication, Gibson et al. (1985) asked ,"If you use graduate assistants, do they receive any course instruction for their teaching?" Ninety-one respondents said that they did, but 41 respondents said that they did not" (p. 289). This question alone does not provide much information about the state-of-the-art of GTA instruction in speech communication but indicates that the majority of schools do train their GTAs.

As reported earlier, the only comprehensive survey of GTA training in speech communication was completed a decade ago by Kaufman-Everett and Backlund (1981), and, unfortunately, the generalizability of that study was reduced by a poor response rate. Although over 1200 questionnaires were distributed to GTAs in thirty-nine states, only 28.3% of the original sample responded, with no indication given in the article whether or not these responses were distributed across a meaningful range of speech communication programs. Nevertheless, their findings tell us much about the breadth of GTA training. In particular, Kaufman-Everett and Backlund identified eleven GTA training program content areas that were mentioned by a third or more of the GTAs responding. In descending order of frequency, these topics were the following: problems encountered while teaching, evaluation methods, critiquing, course outline preparation, general philosophy of speech communication education, writing objectives/goals, constructing syllabi, lecturing, planning lessons/units, educational theory and learning models, and experiential learning methods. Slightly less than two thirds of the GTA respondents indicated that some type of training was available to them. GTAs who indicated having primary or sole responsibility for their courses were most likely to also indicate having had some type of GTA training. When asked whether or not the GTAs in their departments "are...given adequate preparation to teach at the college level" (p. 51), over half either disagreed (31.6%) or strongly disagreed (18.6%) with that assessment, however.

The literature reviewed seems to indicate that, although the general categories of knowledge, motivation, and skill identified by Rubin and Feezel (1986) seem to be common goals in many of the programs described, specific units covered and formats used to cover that information differ widely. Most important, it is difficult to claim to have an accurate picture of the state-of-the-art of GTA training overall, or even in the field of speech communication, for four reasons.

First, as can be seen in the literature cited, many articles describe only one GTA training program in depth (see, for example, Altman, 1987; Barrus, Armstrong, Renfrew, & Garrard, 1974; Carroll, 1977; Costin, 1968; Donahue,

1980; Ervin, 1981; Fulwiler & Schiff, 1980; Garland, 1983; Golman, 1975; Henke, 1987; Humphreys, 1987; Krockover, 1980; Manteuffell & Von Blum, 1979; McCurdy & Brooks, 1979; Pons, 1987; Rose, 1972; Russo, 1982; Siebring, 1972; Stelzner, 1987; White, 1981; Wilson, 1976; Wright, 1987; Zimpher & Yessayan, 1987). While program-specific information is useful, university and/or department needs that underlie those programs may not be generalizable or relevant to other disciplines and/or departments.

Second, the small amount of research that does examine more than one program often focuses on a specific discipline such as foreign languages (Azevedo, 1976; Berwald, 1976; Goepper & Knorre, 1980; Hagiwara, 1976, 1979; Lalande & Strasser, 1987; Nerenz, Herron, & Knop, 1979; Schultz, 1980) or the natural sciences (Allen, 1976; Dykstra & Gelder, 1982; Renfrew & Moeller, 1978) or on a specific institution such as Syracuse University (Cashell, 1977), the University of Houston (Bray & Howard, 1980) or the University of Arizona (Fernandez, 1986). While such information is interesting, the findings may or may not generalize to other fields or institutions.

A third problem results from the research methodology. National studies that attempt to sample actual GTAs in the field suffer from sampling problems common in survey research conducted by mail. Because of the difficulties involved in locating GTAs and motivating them to respond, response rates for these studies are generally below 35%. Diamond and Gray's study of GTA training nationally (1987) and Kaufman-Everett and Backlund's study of GTA training in speech communication (1981) both suffer from this sort of response-rate problem. Consequently, the generalizability of the research suffers. Of the studies cited earlier in this paper, none provide sufficient information about generalizability of the findings to make it possible to assess the degree to which the results represent GTA training as a whole.

Finally, the nature of graduate school and the role of the GTA has, no doubt, evolved somewhat in the past 10 years. Although several methodologically-sound, interesting articles appear in the research literature (Carroll, 1980; Clark & McLean, 1979; Parrett, 1987), these articles deal primarily with training in the 1970s. It is difficult to claim that the state-of-the-art ten years ago still applies to 1989. Only one major study has examined GTA training in the 80s (Diamond & Gray, 1987), and that study focused on only the top eight Ph.D.-granting institutions in this country. No attempt was made to separate out specific disciplines or to collect data from the many programs that offer only Master's degrees.

Given the heavy reliance on GTA teaching in programs nationwide, a need clearly exists to examine the means by which GTAs in speech communication and other disciplines are prepared to handle this considerable responsibility in the decade since Carroll (1980) and others collected their data. To avoid the problems just discussed, this examination should examine a broad range of programs, across a broad range of disciplines, in a way that will maximize the

number of participants in the study. These tasks underlie the research presented in this paper.

Method

During the 1986-87 academic year, a series of four questionnaires was sent to schools and departments offering graduate programs nationwide. The general goal for the study was to solicit information about GTA training from all academic levels within graduate institutions, from graduate deans to incoming GTAs, and to make comparisons both down the hierarchical ladder and between speech communication and nonspeech graduate programs. In all, 4500 questionnaires were mailed, with a fifth phase of the survey yet to be completed.

The Sample

For this study, which focused on department chairs/heads, a purposive sample of graduate departments was selected. The first goal of the research was to describe the state-of-the-art of graduate teaching assistant training in this country across all disciplines, as perceived by department chairs/heads in those departments that train. To do so required a representative sample of graduate degree-granting programs nationwide. To provide breadth for the sample, all graduate degrees offered in the United States were identified from the listing provided in Peterson's Guide to Graduate and Professional Programs (Moore, 1986). Code numbers were assigned to each degree listed, for a total of 163 different degrees. For each institution listed, three academic areas representing departments offering graduate degrees other than speech communication were randomly selected from the advanced degrees listed. Whenever two degrees were randomly selected from what would logically appear to be the same department (i.e., secondary education and special education), another degree was selected so that the resulting sample would contain three academic departments from each school, not three advanced degrees. Whenever a degree that would fall into a department of speech communication was selected, a replacement degree was selected for that institution. For schools with fewer than three departments offering advanced degrees, the department(s) listed was(were) automatically selected for the sample, with the exception of speech communication departments.

Because the resultant random sample contained a significant proportion of esoteric departments that more than likely do not employ significant numbers of GTAs (e.g., pastoral ministry, taxation, demography and population studies, landscape architecture), there was concern that a strictly random sample could result in large numbers of unusable departments. To create depth for the sample, we identified a common "core" of departments from our review of the literature which, in general, tended to meet three criteria: 1) they employ significant numbers of GTAs, thus enhancing the probability that something other than a one-on-one training program would be desirable; 2) they contain at

least one or two programs among their ranks that have published articles on their GTA training program(s), suggesting some concern in the discipline for GTA training; and 3) they offer graduate degrees at one third or more of the institutions surveyed. These departments were the following: English, chemistry, biology, mathematics, sociology, psychology, physics, and foreign languages. For each institution in the sample, one of the above core departments was randomly added to the three departments selected earlier, for a total of between one and four departments from each school.

Because a major goal of the research was to be able to compare speech communication departments with the general sample of academic departments nationwide, every department offering graduate teaching assistantships in speech communication was selected, using the Speech Communication Association Directory of Graduate Programs in the Communicative Arts and Sciences: 1986-87 (Hall, 1985). In all, 127 departments comprised this population.

Selection designators were included in the identification numbers so that it would be possible to reconstruct any or all of the three subsamples at a later date. Postage-paid, return address envelopes were included with the questionnaires to enhance the response rate. In all, 1112 questionnaires were mailed to department chairs/heads. Of these, 470 questionnaires were returned and an additional 167 schools sent letters indicating that they do not employ GTAs, for a response rate of 57.3%. Of these responses, 339 of the selected departments indicated that they employ graduate students who teach. Of the 127 speech communication departments surveyed, 93 returned questionnaires, for a speech communication response rate of 73.2%. Of those, 24 indicated that they no longer employed GTAs. Those departments which did not offer teaching assistantships were dropped from the subsequent analyses.

In all, 69 speech communication departments and 270 other academic departments made up the final sample for this study. Despite the selective addition of the eight departments listed earlier, only four departments other than speech were proportionately overrepresented in the final sample[2]: English, biology, chemistry, and mathematics.

Procedure

Questionnaires were mailed to department chairs/heads during Winter Semester, 1987. The forty-six-item questionnaire contained both open- and closed-ended questions and dealt with eight major GTA training issues: 1) departmental demographics; 2) GTA selection; 3) GTA teaching responsibility; 4) nature of the training program; 5) methods of evaluating training and teaching; 6) GTA supervision; 7) chairs/heads' perceptions about training and teaching; and 8) problems that interfere with training. Respondents were also asked to send TA Handbooks, training course syllabi, evaluation forms, and other related materials so that we could assess programs in a more qualitative fashion at a later date. Over 100 departments included such material[3].

Results

This paper deals with two types of comparisons: 1) between departments of speech communication and nonspeech departments and 2) between departments that train their GTAs and departments that employ GTAs but do not train them prior to their first teaching experience. The first section of this paper provides a general description of the speech communication departments in the sample. The second section, which includes the tables, compares speech departments that train their GTAs with nonspeech departments that train. The third section compares speech departments that train with speech departments that do not train their GTAs, and the fourth and final section compares nonspeech departments that train with nonspeech departments that do not train.

Speech Communication Departments

Sixty-nine departments were departments of speech communication or umbrella departments containing speech communication that employed GTAs. These departments ranged in size from 4 full time, tenure-track faculty (1.4% of the speech communication group) to 32 (also 1.4%). The mean number of full-time faculty was 14.1; the mode was 18. Half of the departments in the sample reported employing 14 or fewer faculty members.

In terms of size of the GTA population in each department, the range of positions was from 1 GTA (2.9%) to 66 (1.4%). The mean number of GTA positions was 13.9 and the mode was 5, making the population of GTAs roughly equal to that of full-time, tenure-track faculty in these departments. Dividing the data roughly into thirds, about one third of the departments reported having fewer than 7 GTAs, another third employed between 7 and 14, and the final third employed over 14 GTAs at the time the data were collected. Of these GTAs, the majority were students working on a Master's degree. The mean number of GTAs working on Ph.D.s or other doctoral degrees was 4.9; the mean number of GTAs working on Master's degrees was 9.3. Only five departments (5.8%) reported hiring GTAs from other departments to teach their courses.

Just over 20 percent of the departments responding indicated that GTAs contribute none of the student credit hours generated by the department, suggesting that these GTAs probably team-teach courses or oversee lab/discussion sections of a mass-lecture course. Over 10 percent reported that GTA sections account for more than half of the student credit hours in the department. The mean percentage for student credit hour generation by GTAs was 22.7%, with the range being from 0% to 95%.

In terms of teaching experience, over half of the speech communication departments (52.2%) indicated that their GTAs had had no prior teaching experience. An additional 30 percent indicated that they had hired between one and six experienced individuals; the remaining 18 percent indicated that

between 7 and 32 of their GTAs had had teaching experience prior to being hired as a GTA in that department. When asked how many of the GTAs currently employed had taught in the department for at least one year, nearly three-fourths of the departments indicated that at least some of their GTAs had been employed for over one year (72.5%).

In terms of course size, GTA-taught sections ranged from 7 students to 700 students. The mean course size was 61.5 (which is an exaggerated value due to the inclusion of mass-lecture sections) and the modal size was 25 students, with exactly one-third of the departments responding indicating that their GTA sections were taught with 25 students. Nearly half (47.8%) of GTA-taught courses were described as self-contained, autonomous sections that follow a common, standardized course syllabus. Another 20 percent were self-contained, autonomous sections that do not use a standardized syllabus. Nineteen percent of the courses taught involved GTA facilitation of lab sections to supplement a faculty-taught mass lecture, which fits with the large number of GTAs who were not responsible for student credit hour generation discussed earlier. Over one-fourth (27.5%) of the departments surveyed indicated that four or more courses in the department were taught by GTAs.

Looking at selection criteria, the two most-commonly used methods for selection were GPA (97.1%) and letters of recommendation (98.6%), followed by GRE or other graduate-entry exam scores (60.9%), ability to meet general requirements for graduate school entry (75.4%), and phone or personal interviews (46.4%). Selection criteria least-used were successful completion of a teaching course (18.8%), prior teaching experience (29.0%), and the reputation of the school at which the students earned their undergraduate degrees (37.7%).

When asked about the people who are in charge of hiring GTAs, 52.2% of the departments responded that it is a committee decision. People cited as likely to be involved in this decision were the director of graduate studies for the department (43.5%), the department chair/head (53.6%), and the basic course director (34.8%). Department-wide decisions were made in 23.2% of the departments included in this sample.

Looking at GTA training, 14 of the 69 speech departments (20.3%) indicated that they do not train GTAs prior to their first classroom teaching experience. Of the 80 percent who do train their GTAs, one fourth of them reported that their training program has been in place six years or longer. One department has been using its training program for 26 years and another has had a program in place for 30 years.

As would be expected, there was considerable diversity in the length and time frame of training programs for those departments that do train their GTAs. The shortest training program involved a one-hour orientation session held the day before the first day of classes; the longest involved two terms of

training and one term of co-teaching prior to teaching alone. The most-frequently reported approach to training involved a one-week or shorter session prior to the start of the term/semester accompanied by an ongoing course during the first term (17.4%). Also frequently reported were a one-week session before school started accompanied by periodic meetings during the term (15.9%) and a one-week or shorter session before the start of school (13.0%). About four percent used a one-week or shorter session before the beginning of school and a course during the first term (4.3%) or an ongoing course during the first term (4.3%). Four schools (5.8%) reported using a two-week session before the beginning of school accompanied by a course during the first term of teaching.

One-fourth of the departments that do train their GTAs indicated that no one person is in charge of that training process. For those departments that did specify one person, the person most likely to be given the responsibility, according to these data, was the basic course director (45.4%). No other person(s) came close in terms of percentage, although a number of job titles were given at least one citation each: department chair, director of graduate studies, education coordinator, forensics director, undergraduate coordinator, assistant department chairperson, graduate committee, and the professor in charge of the course.

In terms of academic rank, most of the people involved in the training were either full professors (25.0%) or assistant professors (22.8%). Associate professors accounted for 17.7%, instructors accounted for 8.2%, and lecturers accounted for 8.6%. The remaining departments either indicated no rank at all or provided a description not easily converted into academic rank (i.e., lab supervisor, senior GTA, newest faculty member, person whose turn it is to do it next, etc.).

About one third of the departments (32.7%) indicated that they do not provide released or reassigned time for training responsibilities. Of the two-thirds that do, 18 departments (56.8%) indicated that they provide one course off per term or semester and four departments (10.8%) provide one course off per year. Other variations which received one or two mentions each: two courses off per semester, one-third load reduction, one-half load reduction, one course off plus summer stipend, four courses off plus summer stipend, full load reduction, and one credit hour per semester.

Of the departments that train, 88.9% indicated that training is mandatory. For those departments that indicated that training is optional, the mean estimate of the percentage of GTAs who participate on a voluntary basis was 50%.

Comparisons between Speech Communication and Nonspeech Departments[4]

Table 1 presents t-test comparisons between speech and nonspeech departments that train GTAs for a variety of demographic variables. In general,

the nonspeech departments appear to be larger. Nonspeech departments indicated that they employ nearly twice as many tenured faculty, enroll significantly more graduate students, and employ more Master's and three times as many doctoral GTAs. They also have on their staff more GTAs who have taught for one year or more in the department, although the difference is not statistically significant. No significant differences were reported for percentage of credit hours generated, average course size, or length of time training has been used.

Insert Table 1 about here

Not tabled is the list of possible variations of training programs. As would be expected, there was considerably more variability in length and time frame and in the title of person(s) responsible for the training in reported in nonspeech departments, reflecting the broader range of disciplines in the nonspeech sample. It is interesting to note, however, that training in the speech discipline tends to be quite similar, with nearly all schools selecting a workshop or training course prior to the beginning of the semester and supplementing that material with regular training and/or staff meetings during the academic year. According to these data, training in the nonspeech departments varies widely, with 44 possible variations mentioned in all (e.g., one hour on the Sunday before classes begin, a staff meeting on the morning of the first day of class, a six-week course during the semester before they teach, an internship with a professor in the course they will eventually assist, an education course outside of the department, a two-day retreat in the mountains, viewing a ten-part videotape on teaching effectiveness on their own, attendance at a department-wide inservice workshop, etc.).

No significant difference was found between speech and nonspeech departments with regard to the amount of load credit provided for GTA training responsibilities (Table 1). Again, the reported range of possible compensation is broader for the nonspeech sample due to the diversity of departments represented (i.e., from one credit hour per year to full load reduction plus summer stipend).

When asked whether the GTA training provided was mandatory or optional, both groups indicated that this training is mandatory (speech = 88.9%; nonspeech = 94.6%), resulting in no significant difference between the two groups. Where training is optional, estimates of how many GTAs actually participate in a given department tend to be somewhat smaller in speech departments (mean = 50%) than in nonspeech departments (mean = 80%).

No significant difference was reported for whether or not GTAs face limitations on their teaching, with most departments in each group indicating that some sort of limitation is in effect. In the speech sample, the modal response to this open-ended question was "freshman-level courses only." In the

nonspeech sample, the modal response was "undergraduate courses only."

Insert Table 2 about here

Selection criteria appeared to differ between speech departments and the other graduate programs surveyed, as indicated in Table 2. In particular, speech department chairs/heads reported that they tend to rely more heavily on grade point average, recommendations, graduate school entry requirements, and phone or personal interviews with candidates. Because the range for the scale was 0 (no) to 2 (yes) for these items, the perfect scores for GPA and recommendations mean that all 65 speech communication departments use these selection criteria. Nonspeech programs appear to rely more heavily on prior teaching experience, with about half of the schools indicating that this criterion is important. No significant differences were found for use of GRE or other graduate entry exam scores, completion of a teaching course, or the reputation of the undergraduate school. Other criteria mentioned with about equal frequency in both groups included the following: TOEFL score for foreign students, maturity, performance in the graduate program, and the fact that teaching is a requirement of the graduate program.

Looking at who selects GTAs (Table 3), speech departments tend to be similar with the nonspeech departments in their reliance on committee decisions, the director of graduate studies for the department, and the department chair/head. Speech departments appeared to rely more heavily than other departments on input from basic course directors and on the use of department-wide input to make hiring decisions. For both groups, use of a selection committee was the most commonly obtained response. The most commonly mentioned "other" response for this question was that teaching is required in some programs.

Insert Table 3 about here

Insert Table 4 about here

Table 4 presents content areas covered in speech and nonspeech training programs and activities or other experiences used to enhance that training. Overall, the two groups are nearly identical. Three fourths or more of both groups indicated covering the following content: classroom management, building climate/rapport, grading/critiquing assignments, course policies and procedures, and teaching strategies. Less than half of the departments indicated that they deal with issues of time management. With regard to activities, nonspeech departments tend to use more microteaching, though not significantly so. Only faculty or other supervisor critiques of teaching

appeared to be used by half or more of the departments in the sample. Experiential activities were reported significantly more often for speech training programs than for nonspeech, although this one difference could be merely a statistical artifact of a .05 rejection level, given the large number of comparisons tabled. "Other" responses included the following: sexism/racism, safety, academic honesty, dealing with American students (for foreign GTAs), needs assessments for students, and university and college policies.

Not tabled are the responses to two questions on the use of prepared course materials. Speech and nonspeech departments seem to be similar in their use of supplementary materials such as TA handbooks and teaching manuals such as McKeachie's Teaching Tips (1986) for their training programs (speech = 61.8%; nonspeech = 59.2%), but speech departments indicated significantly higher usage of audiovisual materials and equipment for training (speech = 50.9%; nonspeech = 39.4%; $p. \leq .05$). Course materials sent along with questionnaires from both groups included extensive training manuals, guides to various university/college policies and procedures, evaluation forms, and collections of articles on teaching.

Insert Table 5 about here

Table 5 presents data for departments that indicated on the questionnaire that they both train and supervise their GTAs. No department in either group reported that they train but do not supervise. Two types of supervision variables are presented: 1) type of supervision and 2) activities that allow departments to accomplish that supervision. In all, four significant differences were identified. Speech department chairs/heads reported that they are more likely to rely on a basic course director as supervisor and, when an experienced GTA is given supervisory responsibilities, are more likely to provide reassigned time to that GTA. Speech departments were also more likely to require GTAs to take a course each semester that they teach and to provide periodic "retreats" to discuss teaching issues. Staff meetings appeared to be the most regularly-used supervision activity by both groups. Supervision techniques receiving at least one "other" mention included the following: visitations by faculty outside of the department, mentoring, supervision by the instructor of the course, teaching committee supervision, and GTA peer observations.

Insert Table 6 about here

Table 6 presents comparisons between speech and nonspeech departments for training evaluation and teaching evaluation procedures. With regard to training evaluation, both groups tend to rely heavily on student evaluations of GTA teaching as indicators of training success. Speech department

chairs/heads reported that they tend to rely less on faculty observations and on GTA peer observations than do other departments, which can be explained in part by the heavy reliance of speech departments on a basic course director who handles training and supervision duties. Other training evaluation techniques included the following: midterm student evaluations, videotaping of GTA teaching, and use of the department "grapevine" for feedback about specific GTAs.

As for teaching evaluation, nonspeech departments reported higher reliance on faculty class visitations than did speech departments. The speech departments were significantly more likely to consider basic course director classroom visitations and comparisons of student performance on standardized tests as measures of teaching ability. Other evaluation techniques mentioned include the following: chair evaluates syllabi and other GTA-prepared course materials, papers graded by GTAs are periodically evaluated, and the chair interviews students in the GTAs' classes.

Insert Table 7 about here

Department chairs were asked to evaluate their own and others' satisfaction with training and teaching effectiveness in their departments, and these data are presented in Table 7. On a 1 (not at all satisfied) to 9 (completely satisfied) point scale, all training and teaching satisfaction item means are at least 6.0 for both groups. In fact, modes for all of these variables are either 6 or 7, suggesting generally positive attitudes toward both training and teaching. Speech department chairs/heads tended to rate faculty satisfaction with GTA teaching and GTA satisfaction with their own abilities higher than did nonspeech department chairs/heads. As would be expected, both groups indicated a strong preference for department-based training over campus-wide training.

Data in Table 8 answer the question "what would you like to have available for GTA training?" No significant differences were identified, although speech departments indicated slightly more interest in campus-wide training and in free teaching materials for GTAs. Only inservice workshops received a mention in two thirds or more of the departments in the sample. Items receiving one or more mentions include the following: fulltime GTA coordinator in the department, doctoral-level course on theory-building and curriculum design, more released time to work one-on-one with GTAs, and invited professional speakers. Two responses indicate strong interest in improving the situation for GTAs: "every imaginable service should be provided" and "increase salaries so that they feel like professionals rather than slaves."

Insert Table 8 about here

Insert Table 9 about here

Table 9 presents a list of possible problems facing departments as they train GTAs, although only the first, lack of financial support for training, was seen as a problem by half or more of the departments in the group. Speech-department chairs were less likely to agree with the statement that "GTAs view teaching as a way to earn money, not as a job commitment" than chairs in nonspeech departments, although the significance of the difference is questionable, given the number of comparisons tabled.

To examine the relationship between breadth of training activity, supervision, evaluation, and responsibility with perceived satisfaction with various aspects of departmental activity, a number of first-order, Pearson product-moment correlations were computed. "Breadth" was operationalized as number of diverse activities, which required creating additive indices. All training items were combined to form an index of training breadth, all evaluation items were combined to form an index of evaluation breadth, all supervision items were combined to form an index of supervision breadth, and all teaching evaluation items were combined to form an index of teaching evaluation breadth. These indices were correlated with departmental demographic variables and with chairs/heads' perceptions of satisfaction with teaching, perceptions about relative quality of GTA training, and perceived problems with training. For these items, all departments that employ GTAs were used in the analyses, not just departments that train their teaching assistants. The results of these correlation analyses are reported in Table 10.

Insert Table 10 about here

Looking first at perception items, it appears that there is a very strong relationship across the board between breadth of teaching, evaluation, and supervisory activity and positive perceptions of teaching ability, at least as far as chairs/heads are concerned. This relationship holds for both speech and nonspeech departments equally well. The best predictor of chairs' perceived satisfaction with GTA teaching would appear to be the number of different strategies employed to evaluate GTA teaching.

Correlations among teaching, supervisory and evaluation items and perceived problems are much less clear. For nonspeech departments, there appears to be a relationship between the variety of ways in which GTAs are trained and supervised and the perception that there is not enough financial support from the institution for that effort. Certainly, the more activity that takes place in a department, the more that activity is likely to strain resources. This relationship does not hold for departments of speech communication, however. In fact, it appears that in speech departments, high

levels of training and supervision/evaluation activity are tied to perceptions that faculty would prefer not to spend as much money on GTA training. This difference could be partially explained by the fact that much training and supervision is handled by the department chairs/heads in the nonspeech sample and by a basic course director in the speech sample. Perhaps the chairs/heads need only answer to themselves for the money spent and, therefore, focus only on the amount of funding, not on faculty perceptions. Since the basic course director may have to seek support from the department as a whole, there may be more opportunity for faculty to complain about the financial outlay in those departments. Thus, money was an issue for both types of departments, but the perception about who appears to be resistant to spending the money differs.

The only other consistent finding is the relationship between chairs/heads' perceived difficulty of the course content that GTAs are asked to teach and levels of activity in nonspeech departments. Apparently, as perceptions of course difficulty rise, so do levels of GTA training and evaluation activity, at least in the nonspeech departments.

Comparisons between Speech Departments that Train and Do Not Train

For the purpose of this study, training was defined as some sort of orientation or workshop or course designed to prepare GTAs prior to their first day in the classroom. To compare departments that do and do not train their GTAs, a series of crosstabulations were run using Chi Square nonparametric statistical analyses. Goodman and Kruskal Tau values were computed using an SPSS-X computer program to examine specific differences between groups. Whenever possible, t-tests were computed between the two groups.

Speech departments that indicated that they train tend to be larger and more dependent overall on GTA teaching. In particular, speech departments that train tend to report significantly higher numbers of GTAs at the Master's levels(10.2 vs. 6.2) and have generally larger graduate programs (46.3 vs. 41.0) than those departments that indicated that they do not train. GTAs in departments that train tend to be responsible for a larger percentage of student credit hour production (24.6% vs. 13.1%) and tend to teach larger classes (66.2 students vs. 57.1 students). Although only small numbers of departments indicated using GTAs as lab facilitators, team teachers and/or graders, the data suggest that the majority of those GTAs are employed in the nontraining departments. The modal type of responsibility for the training groups was an autonomous class with standardized course material while the modal type for the nontraining group was autonomous sections in which the GTA creates his or her own course materials. The differences were not statistically significant, however.

Selection criteria also differed. Chairs/heads in speech departments with training programs indicated that they rely significantly more on GPA (100%)

and recommendations (100%) for hiring decisions, whereas chairs/heads in departments that do not train relied more on prior teaching experience ($p. \leq .05$) and nonstandardized measures such as prior knowledge of the person's skills, assessments of maturity, and completion of candidacy or oral exams.

When asked about limitations on courses GTAs could teach in their departments, chairs/heads in both groups listed various limitations: freshman-level only, no graduate level courses, fundamentals only, courses for nonmajors only, etc. Comparing the number of "yes" and "no" answers to that question, the difference was nonsignificant.

Significantly more of the supervision responsibility in the nontraining group rested with department chairs/heads ($p. \leq .001$), whereas departments that do train tended to indicate reliance on a basic course director. GTAs in departments that do not train were no less likely to be required to attend staff meetings, read daily printed sources of information, compete for teaching awards, and/or attend inservice workshops and retreats than were GTAs in departments that train prior to teaching. GTAs in the nontrain departments were more likely to be observed by a faculty member and less likely to be observed by a basic course director than GTAs in the train group ($p. \leq .05$) but were otherwise evaluated using the same techniques used in the departments that train.

When asked to assess the quality of GTA teaching, chairs/heads in both types of departments expressed satisfaction (means in excess of 6.0 on a scale of 1-9). Departments that train tended to view their preparation of GTAs more favorably when compared to other departments at their institutions than did chairs/heads in departments that do not train, but the difference was not statistically significant. No differences were obtained for perceived problems with preparing GTAs for classroom teaching.

Comparisons between Nonspeech Departments that Train and Do Not Train

Comparisons between nonspeech departments that train and those that do not train reveal many more differences. Again, training tended to occur in departments with more tenure-track faculty (25.5 vs. 18.7; $p. \leq .05$) and more graduate students (74.1 vs. 66.5; $p. \leq .001$), but not necessarily in departments in which GTAs have more responsibility. Training departments offered more assistantships (26.9 vs. 23.0; $p. \leq .001$) and relied more heavily on GTA student credit hour production (19.8% vs. 10.4%; $p. \leq .001$). Departments that train indicated that they hired more of both Master's and doctoral graduate teaching assistants ($p. \leq .001$ for both) and more GTAs from outside of the department ($p. \leq .001$). Those departments also indicated hiring more experienced teachers ($p. \leq .001$) and more GTAs who have taught for more than one year in the department ($p. \leq .001$). No significant differences were found with regard to size of courses taught by GTAs or amount of GTA responsibility for those courses. Both groups indicated very large mean sizes (98.8 for departments

that train and 71.3 for those that do not) and significant responsibility (modal groups were autonomous sections and autonomous sections taught using a standardized syllabus and course materials). Again, a wide range of possible limitations on GTA teaching was provided (47 responses for the nonspeech group), but there was no significant difference between departments that indicated that they train and those that indicated that they do not.

Departments that train tended to rely significantly more on GPA, letters of recommendation, GRE or other entrance exams, and completion of a graduate teaching course ($p. \leq .05$ for each) to evaluate potential GTAS. Those departments also indicated that they were significantly more likely to rely on committee hiring decisions when selecting GTAs ($p. \leq .001$).

Departments that train tended to rely on a faculty member or basic course director for supervision activities ($p. \leq .001$) and were significantly more likely to require GTAs to take an inservice training course ($p. \leq .001$), to attend regularly-scheduled staff meetings ($p. \leq .01$), to attend inservice workshops ($p. \leq .001$), and to participate in "retreats" about teaching ($p. \leq .001$). Departments that train also indicated a significantly greater incidence of offering teaching awards ($p. \leq .001$). Likewise, many more strategies for evaluating teaching seemed to be utilized in departments that train, with the nontrain departments tending to rely almost exclusively on comparisons of student evaluations with departmental means.

When asked to assess the quality of GTA teaching, chairs/heads in both types of nonspeech departments expressed satisfaction (means in excess of 6.0), although chairs in departments that train tended to believe that the GTAs were more satisfied with their own teaching than did chairs/heads in the nontrain departments ($p. \leq .05$). Chairs/heads in the departments that train were significantly more likely to perceive department-based training to be desirable ($p. \leq .001$), but there was no difference in their perceptions about campus-wide training, with neither group being particularly enthusiastic about that option (means of about 4.0 on a 1-9 point scale). Chairs/heads in departments that train evaluated their department's training of GTAs as slightly better than that of other departments in their institution and other departments in their field nationwide, whereas chairs in the nontrain departments rated their preparation as below other departments ($p. \leq .001$ for both items).

Discussion

It is clear that GTAs perform an integral role in basic courses in both speech and nonspeech departments in universities and colleges in this country. Empirical evidence supports the claim that speech communication basic courses and, consequently, departments, are heavily dependent on the teaching of GTAs.

Perhaps the most immediate and important finding of this study is in the percentage of speech programs that provide some sort of departmental training

for GTAs. With nearly half of the chairs/heads in the nonspeech sample indicating that they do not train, it is encouraging to note the healthy percentage of speech communication departments that do train GTAs prior to their entering the classroom. Given the high reliance on GTAs for student credit hour generation discussed earlier, it is critical that these people be prepared for the very difficult task they face in the classroom. This fact is amplified in importance by three reported outcomes of this study: 1) a large proportion of the courses in speech communication are taught by GTAs as autonomous sections (with or without a standardized syllabus); 2) many of these GTAs are working on Masters' rather than doctoral degrees and, thus, have less experience in the field and, more than likely, less experience in the classroom; and 3) GTA teaching accounts for a very significant percentage of the student credit hours generated at the colleges and universities surveyed. Together, these statistics make a very strong case for the need to examine, and quite likely improve, the quality of GTA teaching instruction. Clearly, speech departments are addressing this important concern in proportionately larger numbers than the sample of nonspeech departments examined in this study.

Another interesting difference arises from the apparent disparity in the ways in which departments make the decision whether or not to expend resources on a training program prior to teaching. It would appear that the decision to train or not train GTAs prior to their entering the classroom is based on conscious decision-making in speech communication departments, which is encouraging. For speech department chairs/heads that indicated that their departments do not train GTAs before they are allowed to teach, the evidence suggests that most hire already-experienced individuals for those positions and some provide inservice training during the first term of teaching. In addition, whether or not training occurs, supervision appears to be rigorous in both types of speech communication departments. In contrast, it is more difficult to discern patterns in how nonspeech departments decide whether or not to offer training. As in the speech departments, there seem to be strong correlations between numbers in the program, size of the program, and responsibility of GTAs and training, but the fact that chairs/heads in nearly half of the sample indicated that their departments do not train cannot be ignored. In many cases, both training and supervision are missing, with no indication that these deficiencies might be made up by recruitment of experienced teachers to fill GTA slots. Nor is it clear that departments that allow GTAs to handle autonomous sections train while those that employ GTAs as graders do not, since the modal GTA responsibility in all groups was autonomous sections of a course. Reliance on only one indicator of GTA performance, student evaluations, rather than on the far broader range of possibilities causes one to wonder whether or not nonspeech departments that do not train are 1) aware of the many options available to them and/or 2) concerned about the quality of teaching. Chairs/heads in departments that do

not train tended to view GTAs as less satisfied with their own teaching but were not themselves less satisfied than were chairs/heads in departments that do train.

A third interesting finding is the heavier reliance on a person with a "basic course director" title in speech departments than in other departments. Apparently, much more of the training responsibility is either shared or rotated among a number of people in nonspeech than in speech departments. Although there was no significant difference in terms of the compensation received for being the person in charge of GTA training, speech departments seemed more likely to bestow a title on that person than is true of other departments. The fact that the individual in charge had a title suggests somewhat more stability in the speech programs surveyed than in the nonspeech departments in the sample.

Also interesting is the bimodal reliance in speech departments on two ranks of faculty to fill the all-important role of basic course director: full professors and assistant professors. This outcome could be the result of many reasons, some positive, some negative. Of course, published empirical data do not exist to support the following suppositions, but reams of qualitative information have been derived from years of basic course director conferences and conversations with others who hold that position that allow considerable speculation about the causes for this outcome.[5]

For one thing, of those individuals who become basic course directors as assistant professors, many are called but few are self-selected. As two speech communication basic course directors described in a paper titled "Oh, By the Way....Could You Also Direct the Basic Course?" (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Covert, 1980), many basic course directors are placed in that position as an afterthought, an "add-on" to a regular faculty load for which they may or may not receive some compensation. Many new assistant professors have no intention of becoming a basic course director prior to accepting the job and have no credentials that would prepare them for that task (Trank, 1985). Relatively few people earn an advanced degree in communication education or seek related experience with the intent of directing a basic course somewhere. Nevertheless, a person who holds the title "basic course director" appears to be an integral part of speech communication departments as a whole and nonspeech departments that train GTAs. For people in departments that do not recognize the multiple responsibilities of the job and the very direct impact teaching in the basic course has on the health of the department as a whole, being a basic course director may be neither a highly-valuable nor a coveted position. Thus, the job may be passed along to the newest member of the faculty or may be rotated among assistant professors in the department. As the individuals begin their academic careers, they may pass the title along to yet another new assistant professor.

The prevalence of full professors in the basic course director may result

in several ways. Once in the position, some faculty members may continue in that role for many years, eventually reaching the rank of full professor. These basic course directors often write their own basic course text, devise a standardized procedure for administering the basic course, and create a course that runs smoothly enough to allow them to function in that role for many years. Full professors are rarely sought for the basic course director position, however, at least not in departments of speech communication. A decade of scanning the position descriptions in SPECTRA has shown that virtually all basic course positions are posted at the assistant professor level, with salaries to match. Some full professors may be assigned the role within a given department, however, because they no longer publish or make similar academic contributions. Thus, being a basic course director can be punishment for "bad" behavior. Of course, the degree of generalizability of these observations and whether or not they apply to disciplines outside of speech is not known and would be difficult to ascertain.

The bright spot in the analyses is certainly the fact that speech communication departments appear to be taking the task of training GTAs quite seriously. With over 80% of the departments in the sample reporting that they do some training, we can congratulate ourselves for going to the time and effort to help these junior teachers accomplish the large task we have set for them. Of course, the response rate for speech communication departments was only about 75%, which creates some doubt as to the situation in the other quarter of the population. It could be argued that departments that do train would be more likely to participate in a study assessing training. Perhaps this sample over-represents those departments that do put time and money into GTA training.

In addition, in all fairness to the general sample, it should be noted that this survey dealt with departmental training. Many prominent institutions such as Stanford, Northwestern, Michigan State University and the University of Washington (just to name a very few) have campus-wide training facilities available to graduate students. Perhaps many of the departments in the nonspeech sample reside on campuses where such training is available. Future research might address differences between the more personalized, content-specific training that GTAs are likely to receive in their own departments and the broader, more theoretical training they probably receive in campus-wide programs. Additionally, such research should address whether such non-content-specific training can meet the often specialized needs of teachers in our field (oral criticism, extensive reliance on experiential learning, etc.).

It should be noted, also, that the respondents for this survey were all department chairs/heads. The very consistent finding that the onus of training and supervision tends to fall to someone with the title of basic course director calls attention to the need to collect data from these individuals who are "in

the trenches" of GTA training. Furthermore, it should be remembered that this study deals with perceptual data. Who better to ask about their perceptions about GTA training than the GTAs themselves, both those who have been trained and who have begun teaching and those who have been hired but who have not yet begun to teach? Future research from this project will assess GTA perceptions and attempt to compare them with others in the academic arena such as department chairs/heads and basic course directors.

As a whole, speech departments appear to be leading the way in the area of GTA teacher training. We should applaud our efforts and then redouble them. Much of our undergraduate educational foundation rests on the ability of people who have had no prior teaching experience and who have only recently left the undergraduate classrooms themselves. Where will they learn to teach if not from the faculty that work with them in their graduate teaching placements? GTA training is an issue that directly affects the health of the entire field of speech communication at the university level.

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Footnotes

[1]These eight institutions were the following: University of Arizona, University of California-Berkeley, University of California-Los Angeles, University of Michigan, University of Illinois-Champaign, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, University of Iowa, and University of Oregon.

[2]We say that these five departments were "overrepresented" because 17 or more departments in each of those fields were contained in the final sample (range 17 to 69). The largest number of any other department represented in the sample was 5.

[3]Because of the overrepresentation of speech communication, English, biology, mathematics, and chemistry departments in the final sample, some of the preliminary analyses were run using weighted averages. Other analyses, designed to assess systematic differences between the purposive sample and the weighted sample of nonspeech departments revealed no significant differences. Consequently, all results reported in this paper pertain to either 1) the all-speech sample or 2) the nonspeech sample, containing all nonspeech departments, without weights.

[4] Because only 142 (53%) of the nonspeech departments indicated that they train their GTAs, and because the focus of this research was on the nature of GTA training programs, comparisons between speech and nonspeech departments were made using only departments that do have a training program in place. Schools that do not train their GTAs were eliminated from the analyses. In addition, schools that do train but not prior to the first day of school (4.3% of the speech sample and 5.6% of the nonspeech sample) were eliminated for analysis purposes.

[5]The perceptions presented here are based on attendance at the Midwest Basic Course Directors' Conference for the past 10 years.

TABLE 1: Comparison of Demographic Characteristics between Speech and Nonspeech Departments that train Graduate Teaching Assistants: t-tests

VARIABLE	SPEECH (n=55)	NONSPEECH (n=142)	t/sig
Number of tenured faculty	13.7	26.5	-6.1***
Number of grad students	46.3	74.2	-2.8**
Number of GTAs	14.7	26.5	-3.2**
Doctoral GTAs	5.2	14.9	-3.0**
Master's GTAs	10.2	11.2	-0.5
GTAs from other depts.	0.1	1.1	-1.6
GTAs with experience	3.6	5.2	-1.2
GTAs who have taught for 1 year or more in dept.	7.5	12.5	-2.0*
Percentage of credit hours generated by GTAS	24.9%	19.6%	1.5
Average course size	66.2	97.5	-0.9
Length of time training program has been used	6.2 years	8.9 years	-0.7
Load credit (yes/no)	0.3	0.4	-0.7
Training required (yes/no)	0.9	0.9	0.4

***p ≤ .001
**p ≤ .01
*p ≤ .05

TABLE 2: Comparisons Using Selection Criteria between Speech and Nonspeech Departments that Train GTAs: t-tests

VARIABLES (yes/no)	SPEECH	NONSPEECH	t-alg
GPA	2.0	1.8	2.6**
Recommendations	2.0	1.8	2.2*
GRE or other exam	1.3	1.2	0.6
Teaching course	0.4	0.4	-0.4
Grad school general req.	1.5	1.2	2.1*
Teaching experience	0.5	0.8	-1.9*
Reputation of UG degree	0.7	0.7	-0.0
Interviews	1.1	0.6	2.2*

***p. ≤ .001
**p. ≤ .01
*p. ≤ .05

TABLE 3: Comparisons regarding who selects GTAs between Speech and Nonspeech Departments that Train: t-tests

VARIABLES (yes/no)	SPEECH	NONSPEECH	t/sig
Selection committee	1.2	1.2	-0.1
Director of grad. studies	0.9	0.9	-0.1
Department chair/head	1.0	0.9	0.7
Basic course director	0.7	0.4	2.0*
Department-wide decision	0.5	0.2	2.9**

***p. ≤ .001
**p. ≤ .01
*p. ≤ .05

TABLE 4: Comparisons of Training Programs between Speech and Nonspeech Departments that Train: t-tests

VARIABLE (yes/no)	SPEECH	NONSPEECH	t/sig
CONTENT AREAS			
Classroom management	1.5/74.8%	1.5/77.5%	0.4
Lesson plan development	1.2/60.0%	1.2/61.3%	0.2
Time management	0.9/47.3%	0.9/43.7%	0.5
Classroom climate/rapport	1.5/74.5%	1.5/77.5%	-0.4
Grading/critiquing assgnmts.	1.8/89.1%	1.7/87.3%	0.3
Course policies/procedures	1.7/83.6%	1.6/79.6%	0.6
Creating interest in content	1.0/52.7%	1.1/56.3%	-0.5
Handling student/teacher conflicts	1.4/69.1%	1.2/62.0%	0.9
Teaching strategies	1.4/72.7%	1.5/77.5%	-0.7
Writing/grading exams	1.5/74.5%	1.3/64.1%	1.4
ACTIVITIES/EXPERIENCES USED IN TRAINING			
Microteaching	0.6/30.9%	0.9/45.1%	-1.8
Practice grading/critiquing	0.8/40.0%	0.9/43.0%	-0.4
Group team-building	0.7/34.5%	0.6/28.9%	0.8
Experiential activities	1.1/54.5%	0.8/38.7%	2.0*
Faculty/supervisor critiques of GTA work	1.3/67.3%	1.3/64.8%	0.3

***p ≤ .001
**p ≤ .01
*p ≤ .05

TABLE 5: Comparisons of Supervision between Speech and Nonspeech Departments that Train and Supervise: t-tests

VARIABLES (yes/no) (n=55)	SPEECH (n=142)	NONSPEECH	t/sig
NATURE OF THE SUPERVISION			
Faculty member or BCD supervises	1.6/88.2%	1.4/71.8%	1.9*
Faculty member or BCD receives reassigned time	0.8/45.0%	0.8/39.4%	0.3
Experienced GTA supervises	0.4/19.6%	0.4/18.3%	-0.0
Experienced GTA receives reassigned time	0.3/17.6%	0.1/7.0%	2.0*
Department chair supervises	0.1/5.9%	0.2/11.3%	-1.2
Someone outside of the dept. supervises GTA training	0.1/3.9%	0.0/2.1%	0.6
SUPERVISION ACTIVITIES			
GTAs take course each semester that they teach	0.6/31.3%	0.3/16.9%	1.9*
GTAs attend regular staff meetings	1.1/60.8%	1.1/54.2%	0.3
GTAs read daily printed source of information	0.2/9.8%	0.2/8.5%	0.1
Teaching awards	0.5/25.5%	0.5/26.1%	-0.3
Inservice workshops	0.5/25.5%	0.6/28.9%	-0.7
Retreats	0.3/13.7%	0.1/2.6%	2.2*

***p. ≤ .001
**p. ≤ .01
*p. ≤ .05

TABLE 6: Comparisons of Training Evaluation Methods and Teaching Evaluation Methods between Speech and Nonspeech Departments that Train: t-tests

VARIABLES (yes/no)	SPEECH	NONSPEECH	t/sig
TRAINING EVALUATION			
Evaluation form completed by GTAs after training	0.7/38.4%	0.7/33.8%	0.3
Tests over material	0.1/7.3%	0.1/4.9%	0.8
Faculty observations of teaching	1.0/49.1%	1.4/68.3%	-2.5*
GTA peer observations	0.3/14.5%	0.5/27/5%	-1.9*
Basic course director observations in classroom	1.3/65.5%	1.1/54.9%	1.3
Academic performance of students in GTA classes	0.6/30.9%	0.4/21.1%	1.4
Student evaluations of GTAs	1.5/78.4%	1.4/70.4%	0.8
TEACHING EVALUATION			
Faculty member makes class visitations	0.6/31.3%	1.1/55.6%	-3.4***
BCD makes visitations	1.5/78.4%	1.1/54.2%	2.2*
Classes are videotaped	0.2/9.8%	0.1/7.0%	0.5
Student evaluations are compared with Dept. means	1.7/83.1%	1.5/76.1%	0.0
Student performance on standardized tests are compared across sections	0.4/23.5%	0.2/7.7%	2.8**
Evaluation takes place only if there are complaints	0.1/5.9%	0.1/4.9%	0.2
No evaluation process	0.1/3.9%	0.1/7.0%	-0.9

***p. ≤ .001
**p. ≤ .01
*p. ≤ .05

TABLE 7: Comparisons of Perceptions of Satisfaction with GTA Training and GTA Teaching between Speech and Nonspeech Departments that Train: t-tests

SATISFACTION MEASURE (1-9 point scale)	SPEECH	NONSPEECH	t/alg
Chair's satisfaction with GTA training program	6.6	6.2	0.8
Chair's perception of faculty satisfaction with training	7.2	6.7	0.5
Chair's perception of GTA satisfaction with training	6.0	6.2	0.0
Chair's satisfaction with the quality of teaching in dept.	7.2	7.0	0.8
Chair's perception of faculty satisfaction with GTA teaching	7.4	6.8	2.3*
Chair's perception of GTA satisfaction with their own teaching ability	6.9	7.0	0.0
Chair's perception of student satisfaction with GTA teaching	7.1	6.6	2.2*
Chair's perception of the importance of campus-wide training	4.6	4.3	0.6
Chair's perception of the importance of departmental training	8.1	8.0	0.1

***p. ≤ .001
**p. ≤ .01
*p. ≤ .05

TABLE 8: Comparisons of Desirability of Training Materials/Options between Speech and Nonspeech Departments that Train: t-tests

TRAINING ITEM (yes/no)	SPEECH	NONSPEECH	t/sig
Campus-wide training	0.73/36.4%	0.55/27.5%	1.2
Inservice workshops	1.31/65.5%	1.46/73.2%	-1.1
Resource center on campus	0.80/40.0%	0.83/41.5%	-0.2
Free teaching materials	1.16/58.2%	0.90/45.1%	1.6
A-V materials on teaching	1.13/56.4%	0.94/47.2%	1.1
A-V materials on subject to substitute for lecture	0.62/30.9%	0.44/21.8%	1.3

***p. ≤ .001 **p. ≤ .01 *p. ≤ .05

TABLE 9: Comparisons Regarding Problems that Make Training Difficult between Speech and Nonspeech Departments that Train: t-tests

PROBLEM (yes/no)	SPEECH	NONSPEECH	t/sig
Not enough money	1.09/54.5%	1.18/59.2%	-0.6
Attitude that teaching improves with experience, not training	0.33/16.4%	0.39/19.7%	-0.5
Lack of faculty who will take responsibility for training	0.62/30.9%	0.89/44.4%	-1.7
No way to fire or otherwise control GTA performance	0.11/5.5%	0.11/5.6%	-0.0
Faculty don't want to spend money on training	0.26/12.7%	0.15/7.7%	1.1
Lack of training materials	0.36/18.2%	0.30/14.8%	0.6
Priority on research	0.33/16.4%	0.42/21.1%	-0.8
GTAs view teaching as a way to earn money, not as a job	0.26/12.7%	0.55/27.5%	-2.2*
Difficulty of course content	0.29/14.5%	0.16/7.7%	1.4
We have no problems	0.26/12.7%	0.13/6.3%	-1.2

***p. ≤ .001
**p. ≤ .01
*p. ≤ .05

TABLE 10: Comparisons between Speech and Nonspeech Departments that Employ GTAs (but do not necessarily train) on Relationships between Breadth of Experience and Chairs/Heads' Perceptions: First-Order Pearson Product-Moment Correlations

	Speech/Nonspeech			
ISSUE	**TRAINING**	**TRAINING EVAL**	**SUPERVISION**	**TEACHING EVAL**
Chair's perceptions of...				
...quality of teaching	.14/.11*	.18/.18**	.20*/.19***	.47***/.31***
...faculty satisfaction	.22*/.08	.25*/.10*	.32**/.14**	.49***/.28***
...GTA satisfaction	.18/.19***	.13/.23***	.19*/.18***	.46***/.25***
...student satisfaction	.36***/.16**	.35***/.16**	.24*/.09	.40***/.26***
Comparison with other departments in field	.15/.33***	.16/.34***	.21*/.28***	.22*/.25***
Comparison with other departments at school	.27*/.40***	.23*/.38***	.23*/.32***	.19*/.27***
PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH GTA TRAINING/TEACHING				
Not enough money	-.03/.12*	-.02/.14*	.04/.22***	.01/.20***
Attitude that teaching improves with experience	.07/-.13*	.08/-.04	.03/-.09	.20*/-.01
Lack of faculty who will take responsibility	-.10/-.01	-.07/-.01	.04/-.08	.06/.08
Lack of control over GTA performance	-.06/-.04	.05/-.06	-.09/-.06	.12/.01
Faculty don't want to spend money on training	.09/-.10*	.20*/-.08	.23*/-.02	.12/.09
Lack of training materials	.11/-.01	.09/.02	.17/.06	.22*/.10*
Priority on research, not teaching	-.04/.00	-.06/.01	.15/.02	.24*/.02
GTAs view teaching as a way to earn money, not as a job	-.08/.11*	-.08/.09	-.06/.08	.07/.04
Difficulty of course content	.12/.19***	.01/.20***	.12/.06	.03/.10*

***p. ≤ .001
**p. ≤ .01
*p. ≤ .05